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Relationship between Health Literacy and Educational Materials

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Relationship between Health Literacy and Educational Materials

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Background: Health education materials are often written at high reading levels, yet low literacy in the U.S. is a problem. The Joint Commission identified the need for understandable materials by health care organizations (HCO). However, literature is unclear about how HCO and beneficiaries identify "understandable." **Purpose:** This research study's purpose was to (a) compare participant preferences in health education materials to their REALM scores, (b) determine if health care providers (HCP) view education materials differently from non-health care providers (NHCP). **Methods:** Participants recruited at two health fairs, after informed consent, ranked educational materials commonly distributed on perceived usefulness. Reading levels of materials ranged from college to fifth grade. Health literacy was assessed by the REALM; demographic data were also collected. **Results:** Forty-nine adults participated in the study ranging in ages from 24-82 years. REALM scores ranged from fourth-sixth grade to high school. The majority of HCP and NHCP chose the easy-to-read brochure while the second choice was more diverse. **Conclusions/Implications for Practice:** Regardless of last grade completed, participants preferred the easy-to-read brochure. HCP choosing materials should use the principles of readability. Materials perceived to be useful may encourage clients to examine materials, improve self-management of disease, and improve outcomes.

Information about the Authors:

Under the direction of Dr. Carole Pepa and Prof. Constance Lemley, the College of Nursing presents Relationship between Health Literacy and Educational Material with senior team leader Jacqueline O'Reilly, senior Jennifer Bronnenberg, sophomores Brittany O'Reilly, Jennifer Sechrist, and Katherine Jankauski. The team has competed at Valparaiso University's Celebration of Undergraduate Research for three years while also being accepted to the Clarian Research Conference in 2010.

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